Concerning the KINGDOMS OF God and Men,

W. Britten (W.)

BRITISH MUSEUM

With their Dimentions and GOVERNMENT,

In plain Scripture Truths tenderly presented

To King CHARLES the Second

With his Counsel and PARLIAMENT.

AS ALSO

To such of His Justices and Magistrates whom it may Concern.

AS the words King and Kingdom are Corelatives, so unto a Kingdom belongs a King; and in this life we know two sorts of Kingdoms: First of God, Secondly of men, which every subject thereof doth witness in himself, whereof the first being Gods Kingdom, is within man, containing what is spiritual and invisible, wherein God hath put the immortal thing of himself, that dies not with the body but returns to him that gave it, *Eccles.* 12, 7. And while it is in the body the Lamb Christ Jesus feeds and leads it, making man to partake of the Divine Nature, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. In which Kingdom is the Conscience that is accusing or excusing, *Rom.* 2. 15. And unto which Kingdom all pure Worship doth belong, for God will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, *John* 4.24. *Luke* 17.21.

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The second is mans Kingdom being Temporal, including the Corporeal, External visible things seen without us by the Eye of flesh; and this belongs to King CHARLES the Second in these his Dominions, who hath power herein to govern the same, according to the Righteous Law of God. And as a two-fold Kingdom is known and witnessed by us, so we own obedience to either of them as true subjects to God in spirituals, and man in temporals; mans Law being without us for the outward man, and Gods Law is within us, written in the heart whereby we are taught of God, *John* 6. 45.

Jer. 31.33,34.

Therefore as pure worship relates to eternity, so it belongs to Gods Kingdom, which mans kingdom and Magistracy cannot reach into for saving souls or destroying them, *Mat.* 10.28. And Gods Sons are led by his spirit, *Rom.* 8. 14. And he that hath not that spirit is none of Christs *v.* 9. But a reprobate, 2 *Cor.* 13.5. So although men lead, teach, and govern others in outward temporal things, yet worship is Gods right only; who promised to teach his people in the New Covenant (or New Testament) work, *Heb* 8.10, 11. And to pour out aboundantly of his spirit in these new days of the world. *Acts* 2.17. Therefore who desires to take place in our Consciences before Christ, would deprive him of his right, and us of our comfort in him, and obedience to him, who hath made us a holy Priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices and Temples for his spirit, 1 *Cor.* 6. 19. Yea a habitation for the same, *Eph.* 2.22. And Temples of the living God, 1 *Cor.* 3. 16 That hath said all souls are his, *Ezek.* 18.4. And he will not give his glory unto another, *Isa.* 42 8.

1 *Pet.* 2.5,9.

And God (in these Gospel-times) chuseth neither *Jerusalem* nor *Samaria*'s Mount, nor any other place to be worshipped in: But the Examples of Christ and his Apostles stand upon Record, how they met to worship on the mountain, in deserts, in houses, in fields, by the Sea-side, in the Temple and in Synagogues, no one place (in Gospel-preaching) being preferred before another: And if men for Conscience build a House

John 4.21.

House to meet in, or agree in a form of worship whilst they are so agreed, and so perswaded we are silent to it; but for them to force and compel others unto that place and form, is quite contrary to Gospel-practise and new Covenant precept: for Christ disowns that spirit which would destroy mens lives about receiving him, *Luke* 9. 56. Owning them for Disciples which live in love, *Joh.* 13 35. For envy, forcing, cruelty, and persecution are of the flesh in the destroying nature; but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, &c. *Gal.* 5. 22.

And as Gods image upon men in the innocent life was not of flesh, but in purity, holiness, love, immortality, &c. So Christ came to restore his people unto that image of God in holiness, *Eph.* 5. 24. *Col.* 3. 10. Wherein all filthyness must be clensed forth, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. And so he acted in his spiritual Kingdom, for raising up faln man, but refused to meddle in mans Kingdom for dividing an inheritance, *Luke* 12. 14. Yet paid tribute to *Cæsar* least they should offend. And as *Mat.* 17. 27. he leaves man to govern the temporal Kingdom, so let not men attempt to rule over Christs kingdom, but yield the Lord his right, who accepts of such in all Nations that fear him, and work righteousness, *Act.* 10. 35. Who without distinstinction of places hath promised, *Where soever two or three are gathered together in his name to be among them*, Mat. 18. 20. Such a small Church of people will he own, being so met in any place wherein living praises are offered by living souls, in living Temples, unto an everliving God; who hath not designed a dead Steeple-house only for men to worship in, nor regardeth he a dead Surplice, nor accepteth praises from dead Organs, &c. In these Gospel days.

And of Conformity, that all both good and bad should worship God together in an outward form. First, where there is not a spiritual unity, their outward conformity is but hypocrisie; for as pure Religion binds to the Lord, and binds man to man in the Lord, so all such bands as the cords of love, are made by the spirit of God but the Jews compasing Sea and Land to make one Proselyte (or profession in Religion) brought it to be the child of hell twofold more then themselves. *Mat.* 23 15.

Secondly, although man in his kingdom hath right to make laws (conſonant to the law of God) and to execute them for puniſhing offences, which are ſeen and heard by fleſhly inſtruments, for regulating the outward man, and conforming that to thoſe laws; yet the new Covenant law (or new Teſtament Goſpel law) under which diſpenſation we are, neither gives precept nor example for any mortal man, to ſet up a law in Gods kingdom over the Conſcience, and then plead that law made ſo in mans will to condemn the innocent, as the Jews in their humane wiſdom made a law, which they pleaded to put Chriſt to death.

John 19.7.

Thirdly, Goſpel Scripture argues an impoſſibility in Communion of light and darkneſs, Chriſt and Belial, a Believer and an Infidel, and therefore the Lord bids us ſeparate from them, 2 *Cor.*6.14,17,18. Which is underſtood of holy worſhip only, ſeeing in temporal things we deal one with another, and our outward habitations are among them; yet Chriſt hath ſhewed us how to know them, *Mat.* 7. 16. Whoſe ſacrifice is abominable, *Pro.*15 8. And with ſuch a perſon we are not to eat, 1 *Cor.*5. 11. For no ſuch ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God, 1 *Cor.*6.9,10. *Gal.*5.21. *Eph.*5.5. Therefore thoſe which come into Gods Kingdom muſt be born again, *John* 3.5. And witneſs an eſtate of waſhing, ſanctifying and juſtifying that the body of ſin may be deſtroyed, *Rom.*6.6. And man in Chriſt is a new creature, 2 *Cor.*5.17. All which is to be done in this life, for Chriſt ſanctifies his people whilſt they are in the body, 1 *Theſ.*4.3. And calls them Brethren, *Heb.*2.11,12. And ſaves them from their ſins *Mat.*1.21. But after death men cannot ſin, and he that believeth hath the witneſs in himſelf, ſo his teſtimony is within him.

1 *Cor.*6.11.

Fourthly, although men can make Scholars (or Diſciples) in letters and words calling one another Divines upon adding humane degrees. Giving every one the title of Chriſtian that receives water Baptiſm; yet none are true Diſciples of Chriſt without his ſpirit, which leads the Sons of God, *Rom.*8.4. And they are known by the cogniſance of LOVE, *John* 13.35. Who live not in the ſcoffing, envy, and cruelty, like the world. And it is God only makes Divines

1 *Cor.*2 12.

vines by his divine nature, 2 *Pet.* 1.4. And as Christ signifieth anointed, so he is a true Christian which receiveth the same unction from the holy one that teacheth all things, 1 *Joh.* 2.20.27. All which being considered, how impossible is it to have a conformity of those that serve God, and those that serve him not to be both worshippers at one time, seeing they serve two opposite Masters?

But as Christ makes all his saints spiritual Priests, so they (in Church meetings) may all prophesie (or preach) one by one, if any thing be revealed, so according to Gods law no man is punishable, for speaking in the Church to edifying; but the worlds Church like not this Doctrine, and so do we not suffer in two things: First, for obeying the power of God, rather then the powers of men. Secondly, for preferring the Scriptures of truth before the laws and customs of men? And may we not liken our case to be like *Daniels*, *Dan.* 6.5. Suffering concerning the righteous law of God written in our hearts, *Heb.* 10. 16. Yet as we are bought with a price, so we are not to be the servants of men, 1 *Cor.* 7.23. Which is understood of Gods kingdom; for in the body and temporal things of mens kingdom, service to men is owned in the Lord; but in spiritual things, we are to walk as we have received Christ, and not after the traditons of men, and rudiments of the world. So those duties of subjection to the higher powers, *Rom.* 13. 1. &c and 1 *Pet.* 2 13, 14. Are owned to be in mans kingdom, as may appear. 1 *Cor.* 14.30, 31. *Col.* 2.6, 8.

First, when those Epistles were written, then was those higher powers in heathenism, as *Nero*, *Cesar* Emperour, King *Aretas*, King *Agrippa*, the *Herodian* kings, *Felix Festus*, *Pilate*, and *Gallio*, that would not meddle with Religion. *Act.* 18.12.

Secondly, then was no uniformity in Religion, but the Jews in the Synagogues had the law, the Christian was exercised in the Gospel; and the heathens had their idol worship wherein all had liberty. But if Christians had been then taught a subjection to those higher powers in worship, then must they have left Christianity, and turned back unto *Cesars*, *Herods*, and *Pilates* Religion into Idolaty and cruelty.

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Therefore that subjection there taught was in the temporal kingdoms of men, for outward visible things yielding and paying such custom, tribute, dues, and service as was *Cæsars* right, owing nothing to any man but love, whereby God shall have his due, *Rom.* 13.7,8. and *Cæsar* shall have his due in either of their kingdoms; which things Christ also taught, *Mat.* 22.21. But as concerning the worlds Ordinances, *touch not, taste not, handle not*, which are to perish with the using, *Col.* 2.20,21, 22. And is 1 *Pet.* 2.13. not that to be understood about Gods worship, for in temporal things *Cæsars* Ordinances were allowed?

And although men can give or restrain corporal liberty, yet no man can take away liberty of Conscience, for that will have access to God if the body be in a Dungeon; it being beyond humane reach, as the candle of God in man, *Prov.* 20.27. And manifestation of God within, *Rom.* 1. 19. Wherein if we would judge our selves, we should not be judged, 1 *Cor.* 11.31. And this the Gentiles had which knew not the Letter of the Law, *Rom.* 2.15. And blessed is he which feeds upon the true food of life, but he that doubts is damned if he eat, *Rom.* 14.17,23. So its a desperate thing to sin against Conscience, wherein *John* 1.9. Christ enlightens every one that cometh into the world; but many become lost who are blinded by the God of this world, 2 *Cor.* 4.3,4. And such have their Conscience defiled, *Tit.* 1.15. Now he that pollutes his own Conscience, his sin is upon his own head but wo be to him that defileth another; yet he that forceth another to sin against this manifestation of God, transgresseth in a greater measure: yea he that by sin doth wound the weak Conscience, he sinneth against Christ, 1 *Cor.* 8. 12. And a time must be when all those books shall be opened and every one judged accordingly, *Revel.* 20.12.

Therefore in spiritual things we own a subjection first in Gods kingdom, and whoso keepeth his Commandments dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him; the witness hereof being the spirit that he hath given us, 1 *John* 3. 24. So it is not witnessed by things without us, but a believer hath the witness *John* 17.23. in himself, 1 *John* 5. 10 Christ in his, and he in them making that unity as he reveals things by his

his ſpirit, 1 *Cor.* 2. 10. Which helps us to pray, for fleſh cannot pray as it ought, *Rom.* 8. 26. Whereby man ſpeaks, as the Oracles of God, 1 *Peter* 4. *verſe* 11. And this Spirit was promiſed to the ſeeds ſeed for evermore, *Iſaiah* 59. 21. *Matthew* 28. verſe 20. Which ſhould firſt teach them all things. Secondly, Bring all to remembrance. Thirdly, Abide with them for ever, *John* 14. 16 26. So Revelations are not ceaſed; for no man knows God, but as Chriſt reveals him, *Luke* 10. 22. Therefore humane learning without that ſpirit can neither put up a divine prayer, nor ſpeak as the Oracles of Cod. And if I uſe any prayer without Gods Spirit, it becomes no Prayer to me, but a form of words: as *Iſrael* not ſacrificing in the true obedience, God asked who required it, *Jer.* 5. 28. *Ja.* 1. 10. yet ſacrifice God commanded. And their teſtimony, that the Lord lived, was accounted falſe, ſeeing they obeyed not his power ruling in them.

And as Gods Kingdom is within us, ſo he compared it to a ſmall grain, as leſſer then the ſeeds of ſin in the earthly body; yet as leaven it ſerves to the whole man, *Luke* 13. 19, 21. That Soul, and Body, and Spirit, may be all given up to God, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 23. Which Kingdom, as the good ſeed, is ſown in mans heart as a field, *Matth.* 13. 24, 25. And as by ſin it was loſt in man, or blinded there by the God of this world, 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. So by Chriſt the light it is reſtored and ſeen; yea, found again as the loſt groat, which was but in the houſe *Luke* 15. 8. and there it was found. And this treaſure we have in earthen Veſſels, in the ſhining there, of Jeſus Chriſt, 2 *Cor.* 4, 6, 7. All which teſtimonies are ſufficient evidence to prove Gods Kingdom in man, whence this concluſion follows: That a King hath, or ought to have a full power in governing his own Kingdom; but if he be deprived thereof, then he is a titular King onely; which God will not allow off, to be deprived of his proper right; yet ſometimes he lets man alone a while in his own will.

But Chriſt and his Apoſtles did neither practice nor teach to fine, impriſon, nor baniſh about Religion: yet the humane learned Jews did often attempt ſuch cruelty, and put Chriſt to death about it: And ſome of the Heathens was terrible about their worſhip, as of the Romane Emperors in perſecuting

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*Dan.*3.13. cuting Christians: and *Nebuchadnezzar* about his Image, and *Darius* Governours prevailed to get a decree of him, to insnare, *Dan.* 6. 4, 5. Also *Artaxerxes* would have taught good, *Ezra* 7. 26. To use loss of Goods, Death, Imprisonment, and Banishment upon offenders: but *Ezra* was ashamed to ask aid of the King therein, so he besought the Lord in it, *Ezra* 8. 22. For as the people had offended Gods Law, (and not a humane Law) so his Proclamation was made

Deut. 7. 3. accordingly; as for marrying Heathens, *Ezra* 10 8. But about the Government of Gods Kingdom in man, hath been much contending, (as a great Law Suit, betwixt the Creator and the Creature) whether of them shall rule over the Conscience; which according to Gods Law it is his own right, and Conscience and worship belongs to his Government, and leading forth: yet men have made Laws, that man shall rule over the Conscience: and having made their law they plead it: But the determination of this law-suit I leave to God the judge of all men.

O consider therefore, first of the place (called Steeplehouse) Secondly of the form (called Common-Prayer) that ye would force us to worship in, and by; whether they be from a Gospel rule and practice, or of mans devising in the humane wisdom: and if they are found in the former of these, then they are of Divine institution, and that may be called divine Service: but if they appear to be onely the precepts of men in the fleshly wisdom, it will be taken but for humane service: and so it may give occasion for after generations to say of it, because Gods servants (your Countreymen) could not sin against their Consciences to worship God after the Forms (or Fashions) of men: You made an Act to imprison, fine, and banish them. And these things in the fear of God I have faithfully laid before you, according to the leadings of his Spirit in me.

5 AP 58 *William Britten.*

THE END.